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homemakers' chat
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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Wednesday, October 13, 1943

SUBJECT: "Wartime Fish Story" Information from Food Distribution officials of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

--ooOoo--

Here's the biggest fish story you ever heard...and it's true! Did you know there were 160 varieties of fish you could cook for dinner in your own kitchen...if you could get fish from all parts of the country at once? They range from A to Z....well, from alewife to yellowtail, at least.

Yet most homemakers use only 4 or 5 varieties a year...and then only the well-known ones. But there are a dozen kinds of fish on the market in each part of the country at any one time -- from ocean, lake, or stream. It's easy to make attractive and appetizing dishes out of these fish, following the same general rules you use to cook the ordinary varieties.

But first...how much fish will we be able to get this year? With smaller amounts of other protein foods like meat and cheese, we'd all like to eat more fish these days. Well, there'll probably be a total supply of a billion and a half pounds of fish for food. Our national food budget says...civilians will get about two-thirds of the total fish supply in the next year. Civilians can expect to have 4 out of every 5 pounds of fresh, frozen, salted, or cured fish. The armed forces in this country will get the rest of the fresh and frozen fish. ...each soldier eating about 18 pounds a year. That is 4 times as much as the average civilian eats. But as for canned fish, civilians will get only half the supply. The other half will help feed the armed forces and allies overseas. Canned fish is "fighting food". It keeps well and packs a lot of food value into small space, so the rest of us will have slightly less fish, over the whole year, than we had in 1942.

But the more we use locally abundant fish, the easier time we'll have getting it and the "better buy" it'll be. Most kinds of fish are about equally good for you. A kind of fish you don't know well may have just as much food value as the one you ordinarily buy. Anyway, here's what you get from fish:

First, plenty of high-class animal protein. That's important for building muscle and other body tissues. Fish is an excellent source of animal protein. That's why you can substitute fish for meat in a meal.

You'd be amazed at the important minerals you get when you eat fish. You only need a tiny bit of these minerals, but that tiny bit is essential for health. Here's the list of minerals found especially in salt water fish: calcium and phosphorus, for the bones and teeth...iron and copper, for good blood...magnesium, for strong bones...and iodine, for a normal thyroid. The iodine in fish is especially important, because you can't always get it from other foods. People who lack the necessary trace of iodine in their meals may suffer from goiter, a disease most common away from the sea.

And some fish run right through the vitamin alphabet from A to D. Vitamin A....for normal growth, good health, and good eyesight...and the B vitamins... for steady nerves, healthy skin, and normal growth...are most common. Fish liver oils are rich in vitamin D...but fillets of some of the fatty fish like mackerel or salmon are also good for this "sunshine vitamin".

When you are buying fish...do you know how to pick out FRESH fish? Here's how:

The flesh of the fish should be firm and rigid...your finger doesn't leave an imprint when you press...And the skin should be shiny. The scales should cling to the skin. And the gills should be bright red and have a fresh odor.

Of course, you know that fresh fish sinks to the bottom when you put it in water.

You'll buy your fish whole...drawn...or dressed...as steaks or fillets ....depending on the size. No matter what kind of fresh or frozen fish you buy, allow a third to a half a pound per person. Sometimes, you'll want to buy more than enough for one meal...to allow for a salad or chowder the next day.

When you bring the fish home from the store, put it in the coldest part of the refrigerator. Keep it there until you're ready to cook it. (Fish needs special care to keep it fresh). Wrap it in wax paper so the odor won't spread through the icebox. And don't thaw frozen fish until you are ready to cook it.

Now about cooking. Maybe you're willing to try a new variety...but you're puzzled about how to cook it. Here's an easy rule: the fat fish are better for broiling....the lean fish for boiling or steaming or chowders. And of course you can fry either fat or lean fish. For variations on this rule...consult your cook-book.

One last word...maybe you're worried about getting rid of the smell of fish. For your hands...first chill your hands thoroughly before touching the fish...afterwards, wash your hands in a solution of hot water and a handful of salt...rinse hands in plain hot water before washing them with soap. Use the same system to remove the fish odor from dishes...wash the dishes in a strong solution of hot water and salt, without soap..then rinse the dishes in plain hot water before you put them in soapsuds.

And remember...any day can be fish day..let's not wait till Friday. And this time, try a fish you've never tried before...

(N. B. Check with local market news office to find out what fish are locally abundant. Following list gives varieties usually in season in October).

New York

Cod (lean)
Croaker (lean)
Flounder (lean)
Haddock (lean)
Hake (lean)
Mackerel (Fat)
Pollock (lean)
Silver salmon (fat)
Sea trout (lean)
Whiting (lean)
Clams "
Crabs "
Lobster "
Oysters "
Scallops "
Shrimp "
Mussel "

New England

Cod (lean)
Cusk "
Flounder (lean)
Haddock "
Hake "
Mackerel (fat)
Pollock (lean)
Rosefish "
Scallops "
Mussel "

South Atlantic

Red drum
Grouper
Mullet
Sea trout
Red snapper
Crab
Catfish (fat)
Bullheads

Gulf states

Grouper
Mullet
Red Snapper
Catfish
Crabs
Oysters
Shrimp

Great Lakes and midwest

Catfish
Lake trout
Pickerel
Sauger
Sheepshead
Whitefish
Yellow perch
Yellow pike
Crab
Oysters
Shrimp

Rocky Mountain

Salmon
Halibut
Haddock
Pike
Perch
Lake trout

North Pacific

Flounder
Sablefish
Fall salmon
Silver smelt
Clams
Crabs
Shrimp
Shark

South Pacific

Barracuda (fat)
Flounder
Sea bass
Smelt
Shark
Oysters